

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Thank you to the Shabbos drasha sponsors:

- Mordechai and Miriam Gordon, in memory of Miriam's father, Harold Frost, whose yahrtzeit is 28 Tammuz.
- Murray and Baila Jacobson, in memory of Baila's mother, Clara Labovitz, Chaya bas Shraga Feivel, whose yahrtzeit is 26 Tammuz.
- Ron and Myrna Mitnick, in memory of Myrna's parents, Ruth Barkey, Rivka Dubba bas Pinchas, and Victor Barkey, Chaim ben Avraham, whose yahrtzeits occur during the Three Weeks.
- Alan and Shoshi Stein "in honor of all of Rabbi Marwick's efforts inside and outside of the shul."
- Peshie and Mendy Vim, in memory of Mendy's father, Chanan ben Menachem Mendel, whose yahrtzeit is 3 Av.

Thank you all for your dedication to the shul. May all their neshamos have an aliya, and may everyone be well and healthy and be rewarded for their generosity...amen.

The Yamim Noraim, one of the most special times on our shul, are just around the corner. We have been working hard developing plans to accommodate our members for a meaningful Yamim Noraim davening in a safe and responsible manner. Your feedback will help guide our planning, so please respond to the survey that was sent out on Thursday. This year, there likely will be some noticeable differences; more minyanim, some starting earlier and others starting later than past years, some indoors and others outdoors. But one thing that will be the same as past years is the ruach, the spirit of achdus and kavana, passion and warmth, that will be present in all minyanim. Thank you to our President, Kenny Friedman; Vice President, Itzi Barr; and Executive Director, Shira Glickman, who have been working tirelessly on this initiative.

Parshas Matos, the first of the parshios we read this morning, tells the famous story of the shevatim of Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven. For reasons that--on the surface--appear materialistic, Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven requested to stay on the other side of the Yarden and not to cross into Eretz Yisrael with the rest of Klal Yisrael.

במדבר פרק לב

(א) ומקנה רב היה לבני ראובן ולבני גד עצום מאד ויראו את ארץ יעזר ואת ארץ גלעד והנה המקום מקום מקנה:

And the sons of Reuven had a lot of wealth of herds, and the sons of Gad had very great wealth. And they saw the lands of Yazer and the land of Gilad and the region was well suited for herds.

(ה) ויאמרו אם מצאנו חן בעיניך יתן את הארץ הזאת לעבדיך לאחזה אל תעברנו את הירדן:

They said: If we have found favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not let us cross the Yarden.

This request was probably very painful for Moshe Rabbeinu. His personal dream was to enter Eretz Yisrael, but was told that he could not do so.

דברים פרק ג

(כז) עלהו ראש הפסגה ושאל עיניך ימה וצפנה ותימנה ומזרחה וראה בעיניך בילא תעבר את הירדן הנה:

Nevertheless, the Torah records that Moshe, as the ultimate leader, replied based on a concern about the effect on the rest of the nation.

(ו) ויאמר משה לבני גד ולבני ראובן האחיכם יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה:

And Moshe said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuven: Shall your brothers come into war and you will sit here?

How can you sit here and let your brothers fight for the Land, alone? Are you not part of the Klal? How can you be comfortable shirking your share of responsibility?

(ז) וְלִמָּה תִּנְיָאוּן אֶת־לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבְרֹת אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם יְקֻנָּק:

You will turn the hearts of the Jewish people against crossing into the Land Hashem gave them.

Moshe tells them to think of how this will affect the nation's morale. Think about the effect on the other shevatim. Instead of the nation entering Eretz Yisrael proudly and together, will they enter reluctantly and halfheartedly, wondering why they, too, didn't stay in lush pastures?

There were probably many things going through Moshe Rabbeinu's mind at that moment—this was a display of a lack of emunah and a lack of gratitude on the part of these two shevatim. But to Moshe, it boiled down to one main issue: achdus, feeling responsibility towards their brothers and sisters. This specific issue was resolved promptly, with Moshe brokering an acceptable deal, having them lead the military battles into Eretz Yisrael before returning to Ever HaYarden. They did their part.

But, in the future, this lack of a **feeling** of achdus, would haunt those shevatim and the Jewish people.

And the lack of achdus, as we see in Parshas Masei, the second of this morning's parshios, was rooted in a deeper issue, a real disconnect and a lack of respect for "the other."

The Torah writes that six *arei miklat*, cities of refuge, would be constructed; three in Ever HaYarden and three others elsewhere in the entire Eretz K'naan.

(יז) אֵתוּ שְׁלֹשׁ הָעָרִים תִּתְּנוּ מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן וְאֵת שְׁלֹשׁ הָעָרִים תִּתְּנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן עָרֵי מִקְלַט תִּהְיֶינָה:

The **Gemara Makos 9b** asks—why are there as many *arei miklat* in Ever HaYarden as in the rest of Israel?

This seems unequal because Ever HaYarden was home to 2.5 tribes, while Israel would be home to the other 9.5 tribes. Abayei answers, בגלעד שכיחי רוצחים, there is a disproportionate number of murderers in Ever HaYarden. Because the term רוצחים refers to **intentional** murderers, the Rishonim and Acharonim struggle with this answer. Only one who murders בשוגג, **unintentionally** goes to an *ir hamiklat*. Why would there be a land with a disproportionate amount of unintentional killing?

(יא) וְהִקְרִיתֶם לָכֶם עָרִים עָרֵי מִקְלַט תִּהְיֶינָה לָכֶם וְנָס שָׁמָּה רֹצֵחַ מִכַּף־נַפְשׁ בְּשֹׁגְגָה:

Could there be a culture of בשוגג "unintentional murderers?"--בגלעד שכיחי רוצחים

Why would more fatal accidents happen in Ever HaYarden?

To answer this question, we first have to understand what it means to kill בשוגג, unintentionally. **Rav Dessler** asks: why is someone held responsible for something they do by mistake?

התורה הקדושה תובעת מן האדם שיהיה פנימי. שכל גדרי התורה יהיו פנימיים בו ולא חיצוניים. דבר זה למדנו מגדר עונש השוגג. כי לכאורה תמוה, מכיון שעבר מבלי דעת, מדוע נענש? ואף על פי כן מוצאים אנו תמיד בתורה "והוא לא ידע ואשם או הודע אליו" וכו'. . אבל הענין הוא שכל אשר נמצא באדם בעצם פנימיותו לא יטעה בו ולא ישכחנו, כי הוא מציאותו. ואם שכח או טעה באיזה דבר זה לאות שגדר זה עדיין חיצוני הוא בו...

He answers that killing unintentionally does not mean there was no fault at all. In fact, unintentional implies some form of negligence, some level of disregard. One should have been more careful. It was not completely out of their control. They made a mistake and, therefore, must bear some level of responsibility. A culture that values human life makes fewer mistakes involving human life, and, therefore, there are fewer בשוגג unintentional murders.

Such murders can result from failing to take safety precautions, making sure work areas are clear of people before working there, checking equipment. These are measures that a society that places the highest value on human life would commit to.

Rav Moshe Shternbach writes similarly in his sefer *Taam V'Daas* (pp. 182-183)

אמנם נראה לפי מה שיסד לנו הרמב"ם ריש לפ"ו מהלכות דעות כי "דרך ברייתו של אדם להיות נמשך בדעותיו ובמעשיו אחר ריעיו וחביריו ונוהג כמנהג אנשי מדינתו, לפיכך צריך אדם להתחבר לצדיקים ולישב אצל החכמים תמיד כדי שילמוד ממעשיהם, ויתרחק מן הרשאים ההולכים בחשך כדי שלא ילמוד ממעשיהם." והאריך שם בחיוב האדם להתרחק מסביבתו הרעה לילך למדינה אחרת שאנשיה צדיקים, ולפי"ז נראה פשוט כי במקום שמרובים בו רוצחים, הרי גם הכשרים שדרים שם מושפעים הם מרשעת פועלי און, ולא ישימו על לבם לשמור דרכם שלא יומת אדם על ידיהם אפילו בשוגג, כי גם השגגה בהעדר זהירות ותשומת לב היא נגרמת, שהרי אין האנוס גולה לעיר מקלט, ולכן הוצרכו להרבות בגלעד ערי מקלט, בהיותה מקום משכן למרצחים במזיד, ונקל בעיני יושב קריה עקובה מדם זו, עון שפיכות דמים וממילא רבים הם שם ההורגלים בשגגה.

He suggests that people are influenced by the culture in which they live, and a culture of less regard for human life will inevitably lead to a culture where more accidents occur. Cultures that value human life promulgate and enforce safety rules, despite the greater cost, and the fortunate result is fewer accidents. Safety precautions prevent accidents.

Chazal teach us that Ever HaYarden--where Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven lived--was prone to more "unintentional murders" as an outgrowth of the absence of feeling connected to others and seeing it as their responsibility to ensure the welfare of others, a lack of real unity, achdus.

ויאמר משה לבני גד ולבני ראובן האחים יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה:

Back when these two shevatim announced to Moshe that they wished to stay in Ever HaYarden, they displayed an attitude of not taking responsibility for the safety of their brothers--of putting their own materialistic needs ahead of the nation's morale. This attitude was ultimately rooted in a lack of feeling connected to one another. And in that culture--when people care less about others--more unintentional deaths can occur.

This lack of achdus played out, tragically, later in the Jewish history as well. The **Medrash Bamidbar Rabbah** says that Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven were the first to be exiled in Churban Bayis Rishon because they had separated themselves from the rest of the Jewish community.

במדבר רבה (וילנא) פרשת מטות פרשה כב: וכן אתה מוצא בבני גד ובני ראובן שהיו עשירים והיה להם מקנה גדול וחבבו את ממונם וישבו להם חוץ מארץ ישראל לפיכך גלו תחלה מכל השבטים שנא' ויגלם לראובני ולגדי ולחצי שבט המנשה ומי גרם להם על שהפרישו עצמם מן אחיהם בשביל קנינם

And eventually that same midda led to the second Churban, as well. As Chazal commented, the second churban was the result of *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred.

תלמוד ירושלמי (וילנא) מסכת יומא פרק א

אבל בשני מכירין אנו אותם שהיו יגיעין בתורה וזהירין במצות ובמעשרות וכל ווסת טובה היתה בהן אלא שהיו אוהבין את הממוזן ושונאין אלו לאלו שנאת חנם

Separating oneself from the Jewish community is a great sin and leads to exile. Because the secret of our survival has always been our connection to the broader community, taking responsibility for one another. Only as a unified group are we able to accomplish our unique mission in this world.

In the **Haggada**, when outlining a response to each of the four sons, the core issue with the wicked son is defined as follows: לפי שהוציא עצמו מן הכלל, He feels no connection to the Jewish people, to our history, to our destiny. That will ultimately lead him to terrible places.

Chazal teach us that the second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*--baseless hatred between one man and his fellow. Unlike the first *Beis HaMikdash*, which was rebuilt after 70 years, the second *Beis HaMikdash* still has not been rebuilt, even after almost 2,000 years

What is *sinas chinam*? What is baseless hatred? **Rav Dessler** writes that it is a lack of connection between people, when people resent others not because of a perceived threat or injustice, but simply because they feel completely disconnected from them.

מכתב מאליהו ח"ב עמ' 51

...בבית שני, חורבנו היה בעבור שנאת חנם, פירוש שנאה שלא מתוך התחרות בשאיפת איזו תאוה, אלא ממש "חנם" שהשנאה היתה מצד עצם מציאותם יחד, מותך שלא יכלו לסבול את מציאות זולתם

Why is it impossible for *sinas chinam* and the *Beis HaMikdash* to coexist?

The function of the *Beis HaMikdash* was to enable the *Shechinah* to reside within the hearts of the Jewish people as a group.

The **Vilna Gaon** teaches in his commentary on *Mishlei* (6:19)

כאשר ישראל באחדות אז השכינה שורה בישראל וזהו ונפשו אותה ויעש אבל כאשר מדנים בין אחים אז וגעלה נפשי that the *Shechinah* rests on the Jewish people only when total unity exists among them: "When *Bnei Yisrael* are united, then the *Shechinah* rests on *Yisrael*...but when there are 'conflicts among brothers,' then 'My Soul is revolted.'" (*Vayikra* 26:30).

The *Shechinah* does not dwell among a fragmented nation, but only among a united nation. And that was the function of the *Beis Hamikdash*, to unite.

I believe this is why a shul is called a *Beis HaKnesses* (a gathering place). As the Gemara teaches us, today the *Beis HaKnesses* serves in place of the *Beis Hamikdash* because a primary function of the *Beis Hamikdash* was to bring people together.

On the three regalim, we conclude the *mi shebeirach* for one who gets an Aliya with the phrase, "*v'yizkeh la'alos l'regel im kol Yisroel echav*"--"May he merit to fulfill *aliyah la'regel* together with the entire Jewish people." The story is told that the **Brisker Rav** once received an *aliyah* on a *regel* and, in reciting the *mi shebeirach*, the *gabbai* inadvertently omitted the words "*im kol Yisroel echav*" The Brisker Rav insisted that the *mi shebeirach* be repeated. To him, coming together with Klal Yisrael was a crucial component of visiting the *Beis Hamikdash* on the regalim and, without mentioning that component, his *mi shebeirach* was incomplete.

So what is the answer to the churban? How can we repair it?

The **Ibn Ezra** writes that if we are careful to follow *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, loving fellow Jews, the Jewish people will merit to live again in the Land of Israel.

אבן עזרא ויקרא פרק יט: (יז) לא תשנא את אחיך הפך ואהבת לרעך (יה). והנה אלה המצוות כולם נטועות בלב, ובהשמרם ישבו בארץ, כי על שנאת חנם חרב בית שני.

Hundreds of years later, **Rav Kook** would reword this as follows in his *Orot Hakodesh III*, p. 324

"If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love — *ahavas chinam*."

It is a daunting task, but we cannot sit back and do nothing...האחיים יבואו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה.

This is a moral calling for each of us to do our part. As small as it may seem, it is not insignificant!

This is the time to rectify the sin of *sinas chinam*, to increase kindness and empathy towards one another, to increase tolerance and patience, and to take more responsibility for the Jewish community, here and in Israel, to look for ways to get involved in the welfare of our shul, and support all the important mosdos we all rely on. Especially during this pandemic, we must look out for others. And in that zechus, may we merit to see an end to this mageda and the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash* bimhera viyamenu...amen.